



GETTING EDITORIAL BOARDS TO SUPPORT YOUR ISSUE

MEDIA ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

Your media advocacy efforts should include outreach to newspaper editorial boards. Opinion leaders throughout your area—from lawmakers to business people—pay attention to the editorial pages, which makes them an excellent way to "narrowcast" to decision-makers. A good editorial supporting your issue(s) can go a long way in helping to educate your community about the needs of older Americans. A well-planned editorial visit could result in a supportive editorial and additional "earned" media for your issue.

- **The first step is research.** Know your newspaper's editorial positions and know the work of individual editorial writers. Newspaper editorial boards are like any other department. They include a team of writers with different styles and "beats" whom you might want to reach. Focus your efforts on the writers whose "beats" might include issues relating to older adults. Think broadly, because what affects older individuals affects their families too.
- **Include editorial writers on your distribution list** for press releases and media advisories so they will be familiar with your campaign before your first meeting. Ideally, you will have established a relationship with one or more of the editorial writers before you try to schedule a meeting with the editorial board.
- **Think about what connections** you or your supporters might have to the newspaper when scheduling your meeting. If there are existing relationships, use them to get the meeting. If not, call the paper and ask for the editorial board meeting scheduler. Tell that person why your issue/campaign is newsworthy and important to the community. Be prepared to send materials for the scheduler to review.
- **Find out who will be attending.** A reporter or two, the full editorial board, or only a few select representatives could be at the meeting. It's important for your written and oral presentations to know ahead of time who will be in the room.
- **Send the attendees a packet of information** before the meeting. Items to include might be research reports, newspaper clippings to prior press releases, or other materials about your issue or campaign. (See "Developing a Press Kit.")
- **Select your team carefully**—keep it small (no more than 4), including professionals, community leaders, and individuals who can personalize the issue. (See "The Messenger Is as Important as the Message.")



- **When you're in the meeting, speak professionally.** Make sure your statements accurately reflect what you want the community to know, and beware of making side comments that could detract from your message. Unless you've negotiated something different in advance, everything you say is "on the record." Prepare a brief presentation on the problem, your proposed solution, and a summary of your community support. Do not hesitate to use notes and visuals. Take your time answering questions. If you don't know how to respond, ask if you can do some research and get back to the editorial board with an answer. (See "Tips on Talking to the Media.")

Don't Forget! After your meeting, follow up with a thank you letter and summary of your presentation.